

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 07506 150952Z

12

ACTION EA-10

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R 150613Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4502

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 7506

EO 11652: GDS

TUS: PINT, MILI, VN, VUG

SUBJ: COMMENTS ON SITUATION IN NORTH VIET-NAM BY  
FORMER AUSTRALIAN CHARGE

REF: PEKIN 1978

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. SUMMARY: COMMENTS ON SITUATION IN DRV BY AUSTRALIAN CHARGE LEWIS (REFTEL) SIMILAR TO THOSE MADE TO EMBOFF BY BRUCE WOODBERRY, AUSTRALIAN CHARGE FROM JULY, 1973 TO OCT, 1974. WOODBERRY NOTED ISOLATED LIFE OF AUSTRALIANS IN HANOI. LIVING CONDITIONS CONTINUE TO BE DIFFICULT. HAC DOUBTED HANOI INTENDS MAJOR ASSAULT ON SOUTH VIETNAM IN 1975, AS RECENTLY-UNDERTAKEN TRANSFORMATION OF PROVINCE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONS INTO BASIC ECONOMIC UNITS OF COUNTRYSIDE WILL PRODUCE CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION. HE THOUGHT DRV WOULD NOT SIMULTANEOUSLY UNDERTAKE SUCH RE-

ORGANIZATION AS WELL AS LARGE OFFENSIVE IN SOUTH. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED THESE ARE IMPRESSIONS BASED ON SLIMMEST OF EVIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 CANBER 07506 150952Z

2. COMMENTS BY AUSTRALIAN CHARGE IN HANOI, GRAEME LEWIS

(REFTEL), ARE VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE OF HIS PREDECESSOR, BRUCE WOODBERRY, WHO WAS IN HANOI FROM JULY, 1973, TO OCTOBER, 1974. WE UNDERSTAND THAT WOODBERRY STOPPED IN SAIGON ON HIS WAY TO AUSTRALIA FROM HANOI AND WAS IN TOUCH WITH EMBASSY SAIGON OFFICERS. HE HAS MADE FOL COMMENTS TO EMBOFF ON ESTUATION IN NORTH VIET-NAPMSINCE TOS RE-DITURN TO CANBERRA, WHICH SUPPLEMENT LEWIS' REMARKS IN REF-TEL.

3. WOODBERRY HAD VERY RESERVED VIEW ABOUT VALUE OF HIS

OBSERVATIONS, SINCE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY IN HANOI LIVES PARTICULARLY ISOLATED LIFE. VIRTUALLY ONLY REGULAR CONTACT IS WITH OTHER DIPLOMATS, AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNIST AUSSIES SEEM TO BE TREATED BY DRV WITH VIRTUALLY AS MUCH SUSPICION AS WESTERN DIPLOMATS. EMBASSY HAS SIX ROOMS IN THONG NHAT HOTEL (ONE EACH FOR FIVE STAFF MEMBERS AND ONE ROOM FOR OFFICE DESKS AND TYPEWRITERS). WOODBERRY PAINTED GRUESOME PICTURE OF HIS OWN LIVING EXPERIENCES IN HOTEL, ADDING THAT RATS HAD OCCASIONALLY GNAWED AT HIS HAIR, AS HE USES VARIOUS HAIR POMADES WHICH PRESUMABLY ATTRACT THEM. DRV GOVERNMENT HAS PROMISED TO MAKE HOUSE AVAILABLE FOR NEW AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR, BUT, AS IT IS CURRENTLY OCCUPIED BY SENIOR DRV OFFICIAL, WOODBERRY DOUBTS IT WILL EVER BE AVAILABLE.

4. WOODBERRY SAYS IT IS

EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO HAVE ESSENTIAL RE-

PAIRS CARRIEE OUT ON DIPLOMATIC CORPS HOUSES IN HANOI, DUE SHORTAGE OF MATERIALS AND LETHARGY BY DRV OFFICIALS. FRENCH EMBASSY HAD ATTEMPTED TO ERECT PRE-FAB HOUSE IN THEIR COMPOUND (WHICH HE TERMED "OVERFLOWING" WITH ADDED STAFF) BUT HAD GIVEN UP EFFORT AS TOO DIFFICULT IN VIEW OF OFFICIAL OBSTRUCTION AND DELAYS. PRC WILL BUILD BRIDGE OVER RED RIVER SOME 8-10 KILOMETERS ABOVE PAUL DOUMER BRIDGE, ULTIMATELY TO CONNECT TO ROAD TO HILL STATION OF TAM DAO NORTH OF HANOI; DIPLOMATIC ENCLAVE, TO BE ESTABLISHED ON ROAD TO TAM DAO, WILL BE SOME

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 CANBER 07506 150952Z

20 KILOMETERS NORTH OF CHINESE BRIDGE.

5. ON DRV INTENTIONS, WOODBERRY AGAIN EMPHASIZED HE WAS GIVING ONLY PERSONAL OPINION, BASED ON SLIMMEST OF EVIDENCE, SINCE HE LIVED ISOLATED LIFE IN HANOI. HOWEVER, HE NOTED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION GIVEN IN DRV PRESS TO MAJOR AGRICULTURAL REORGANIZATION AIMED AT TRANSFORMING PRESENT PROVINCE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATIONS INTO

BASIC ECONOMIC UNITS OF COUNTRYSIDE, REPLACING MUCH SMALLER AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES SET UP IN EARLY AND MID-1960'S. WOODBERRY SPECULATED THAT SUCH LARGE-SCALE REORGANIZATION WOULD RESULT IN CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION AND DIFFICULTIES AND COMMENTED THAT DRV WOULD HARDLY UNDERTAKE SUCH EFFORT IF IT INTENDED TO LAUNCH MAJOR OFFENSIVE IN SOUTH IN 1975.

6. AUSTRALIAN DEPT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ANNOUNCED NOV 7 THAT DAVID G. WILSON, COUNSELOR FOR AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN OTTAWA SINCE 1972, WOULD BE AUSTRALIA'S FIRST AMBASSADOR TO THE DRV. ANNOUNCEMENT SAID WILSON WILL TAKE UP HIS POST IN HANOI IN FEB, 1975. WILSON WAS BORN IN ADELAIDE MARCH 26, 1927, AND HAS BEEN MEMBER OF AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMATIC SERVICE SINCE 1952, SERVING AT NEW DELHI, THE HAGUE, PHNOM PENH, ROME, NOUMEA, AND OTTAWA.  
GREEN

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